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UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 001372

SIPDIS

STATE FOR PM, INL/LP AND WHA/CEN

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [KJUS](#) [SNAR](#) [SOCI](#) [PHUM](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: NATIONAL ARMS REGISTRY BEGINS 18 MONTHS AFTER
MANDATE

1. (U) On June 14, the Honduran Ministry of Public Security officially inaugurated a national firearms registry in the cities of Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula, and La Ceiba. The opening of the registry comes some 18 months after the Honduran National Congress approved legislation to regulate the sale, carrying, use, modification, repair, and accumulation of firearms and munitions in addition to the storage and transport of explosives. Under the law, all commercial arms in the country, estimated at approximately 400,000, should be registered in the next six months. A maximum of five weapons are permitted per person. Arms that must be registered include revolvers, pistols, shotguns, and semiautomatic weapons.

2. (U) Minister of Public Security (MOPS) Oscar Alvarez indicated to the Honduran press that he expected the government of Honduras (GOH) to open registries in Santa Rosa de Copan, Comayagua, and Juticalpa. The national arms registry is intended to document all legal commercial firearms in Honduras. Under the law, registrants are required to provide the GOH with identifying information including a physical description, address, and fingerprints. Owners must also register the serial numbers of each firearm they own. A ballistics test will be conducted to further identify the weapon for law enforcement purposes. Citizens are required to pay approximately USD 41 per weapon, of which USD 30 will go to the registry and USD 11 for municipal taxes.

3. (U) Under the new program, firearm owners are allowed a six-month period to register their firearms with the GOH which will end in December 2004. After that, GOH authorities will be authorized to confiscate unregistered firearms and owners will face fines and/or imprisonment. Starting in 2005, the GOH has also indicated its intent to confiscate all firearms banned for private use, including prevalent automatic assault weapons such as the Uzi, AK-47, M-16, and M-1.

4. (SBU) Comment: Honduras is awash in firearms and almost all businesses of any significance hire private armed guards to provide security. Criminals are generally armed and organized criminal groups have access to powerful automatic weapons. There is also a market in Honduras for illegal arms trafficking. While some gun owners will dutifully comply with this new legislation, it is doubtful that the majority of firearm owners will. Moreover, the GOH's ability to enforce this mandate remains quite limited. As such, Post believes this program will have limited impact on rising crime rates in Honduras or on illegal gun ownership in general. Police ministry officials continue to be concerned about any importation of additional weapons into Honduras. End comment.

PALMER